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A H F M R

BERTA HERITAGE FOUNDATION FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and staff of the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical

Research, we are pleased to offer you our community report for 2000-2001 in calendar format. We hope that as the months go by in 2002, you will enjoy seeing and reading about some of the talented people in whom we invest. You'll see that in many photos, our Heritage researchers are pictured with people who could very well be your family, friends, or neighbours. It is our hope that these and all Albertans will someday benefit first-hand from the exciting research gains made by Heritage researchers. As 2002 passes, we hope our calendar leaves an image with you that long-term investment in basic biomedical and health research is essential in creating new knowledge, new discoveries to improve health, and new directions to build on research excellence.

The Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research has invested

more than \$650 million into

research activity in Alberta. Since its

inception more than 20 years ago,

the Foundation has sought out the

best possible systems and policies in

our province to support a full range

of health research activity that is

now known throughout the world.

An essential part of the Foundation's

mandate is the investment in basic,

biomedical research—the investiga-

tions of cell, genes, and molecules.

Basic researchers individually may

or may not make headlines, but

collectively they add to the growing

repository of important knowledge that is so crucial to

advances in our health. The AHFMR investment has

also extended in recent years to include health research

focused on communities, populations, and the types of

health technologies and services needed to deliver top

quality care throughout our province.

In this past year we have awarded the largest amount

for personnel funding in our history—\$53 million—to

researchers working in 13 faculties at our universities, in

health regions and in affiliated hospitals. More than 200

senior researchers and 350 researchers-in-training make

up our province-wide Heritage community and they

have a tremendous leveraging power. It is estimated that

for every dollar Heritage invests in a researcher, that

researcher attracts \$2-3 in outside funding to Alberta.

The Heritage title is difficult to achieve—more than 600

reviewers from around the globe assess applications for

Heritage funding—and the recipients of our funding are

desperately proud to distinguish themselves as Heritage

researchers.



One of the key factors in our success was the wisdom of the provincial government more than two decades ago in creating AHFMR as an independent entity from government, yet with checks and balances built into its framework to ensure accountability to the people of Alberta. AHFMR was charged with the singular task of building and sustaining a first rate community of health researchers. In the 21 years since, we have witnessed the unleashing of brainpower in this province at awe-inspiring levels. From discoveries in diabetes (see June in this calendar) and cancer (see July) to new ground gained in mental health (see May), early life (see December) and in the development of technologies to improve health (see February), AHFMR supported health research has made this province a centre of excellence. Not only are Heritage researchers dedicated scientists, they are also mentors and teachers for a younger generation (see May), and colleagues in collaborative initiatives with other world centres.

We cannot predict what the future brings. The one thing we do know is that AHFMR's long-term support of research combined with unwavering excellence in our research community will most certainly continue to yield benefits for the health of Albertans and people throughout the world.

With best wishes for 2002.

Matthew W. Spence MD, PhD, President and CEO
Harley Holchies, Chair, AHFMR Board of Trustees

HERITAGE RESEARCHERS PROFILED IN THIS CALENDAR

Explanations

U of A:
University of Alberta
U of C:
University of Calgary
U of L:
University of Lethbridge
***Not currently
funded by AHFMR**

For all explanations about AHFMR programs and funding categories, please see the Programs and Financial Highlights 2000-2001 in the middle of this calendar or visit our web site at: www.ahfmr.ab.ca

January

Dr. Laurie Brooks is an Edmonton physician who accepted a professional development opportunity with AHFMR's Health Technology Unit to conduct research on the regulation of acupuncture treatment in Alberta.

February

Dr. Louis Francescutti is an emergency physician and director of the Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research at the U of A.
Lloyd Osler is Founder and Chief Architect and **Al Gourley** is President and CEO of ROAM-I.T. They received AHFMR Technology Commercialization support.

March

Dr. Kim Raine is a Heritage Health Scholar at the U of A.

April

Dr. Ming Chan is a Heritage Clinical Investigator at the U of A.

May

Misha Hartfeil is a 2001 Heritage Youth Researcher Summer (HYRS) Program participant at the U of A. Dr. Nick Coupland was Misha's mentor in the 2001 HYRS program and is a Heritage Clinical Investigator at the U of A.

June

Dr. Timothy Kieffer is a Heritage Scholar at the U of A.

July

Dr. Chris Bleackley is a Heritage Scientist at the U of A.

August

Dr. Lesley Brown is a Heritage Population Health Investigator at the U of L.

September

Kathy Belton is a Research Associate with the Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research at the U of A. Kathy is an alumnus of the SEARCH Program.

October

Dr. Voon Wee Yong is a Heritage Senior Scholar at the U of C.

November

Dr. John Wallace is a Heritage Scientist at the U of C.

December

Dr. Valerie Kirk is a Calgary pediatric respirologist and researcher who received project funding from the Health Research Fund.

Researchers featured in the 2000-2001 Programs and Financial Highlights

Dr. Shabih Hasan is a Heritage Scholar at the U of C.

Dr. Lee Anne Tibbles is a Heritage Clinical Investigator at the U of C.

Dr. Robin Fainsinger is a palliative care physician at the Grey Nuns Hospital in Edmonton who received AHFMR Opportunity Fund support.

Dr. Michele Crites Battie receives Health Research Fund support for her research at the U of A.
Dr. Tapio Videman is a Heritage Senior Health Scholar at the U of A.

Dr. Derrick Rancourt is a Heritage Scholar at the U of C.

Dr. Preston Wiley receives Health Research Fund support for his research at the U of C.

Dr. Colleen Maxwell is a Heritage Population Health Investigator at the U of C.

Sara Binder received an AHFMR Media Fellowship while she was a medical student at the U of C.

Dr. Peter Nguyen is an AHFMR Scholar at the U of A.

Dr. Laura Shanner is a Heritage Scholar at the U of A.

Dr. Sam Lee is a Heritage Senior Scholar at the U of C.

Dr. Paul Mobit received Heritage Independent Establishment funding for his research at the Tom Baker Cancer Institute in Calgary.

Dr. Deborah Burshtyn is a Heritage Scholar at the U of A.

Dr. Liam Martin received Health Research Funding for his research at U of C.

***Dr. Bonnie Kaplan** is a Professor in the Behavioural Research Unit at Alberta Children's Hospital in Calgary.

Dr. Karen Madsen is a Heritage Scholar at the U of A.

Dr. Paul Hasselback received AHFMR Opportunity Fund support for his research in Lethbridge.

***Dr. Chris Armstrong-Esther** is a Professor in the School of Health Sciences at the U of L.

Dr. Ronald Moore is a Heritage Scholar at the U of A.

Elaine Corbett was the Year 2000 winner of the Lionel E. McLeod Health Research Scholarship for her doctoral studies at the U of A.

Dr. Cameron Wild is a Heritage Population Health Investigator at the U of A. His research is also supported by the Health Research Fund.

For further information on any of the above people, please go to our web site at www.ahfmr.ab.ca and use the "Search our Site" function by entering the person's last name.



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**term ended between March 31, 2000 and April 1, 2001*

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J A N U A R Y






ACUPUNCTURE is often seen as a new alternative to conventional Western medical treatment. In fact, this traditional Chinese medicinal therapy has been practiced for more than 5,000 years. **Dr. Laurie Brooks**, a physician trained at the University of Alberta, practises “integrated medicine”, a combination of Western treatments and traditional therapies that include acupuncture and Qi Gong, a form of acupuncture without needles. The medical acupuncturist has travelled the world to learn more about such ancient practices, journeying to the jungles of the Amazon for a workshop on medicinal plants, and to China for a course on acupuncture. ♣ Now, as part of a professional-development opportunity with AHFMR’s Health Technology Assessment unit, Dr. Brooks is examining the effectiveness of acupuncture treatment. “The ultimate goal of health technology assessment is to provide the best evidence available for healthcare professionals, policy-makers, and the public,” she says. She will critically appraise literature reviews on conditions that have been treated by acupuncture. ✱


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FEBRUARY





ROAM I.T. Emergency-room physician **Dr. Louis Francescutti** has come up with an innovative idea that is changing the way emergency medical services (EMS) crews record patient information. The RAMPART-EMS software system developed by the Edmonton injury researcher is a simpler, paper-free way for paramedics and emergency medical technicians to capture critical patient information while still at the injury site. The system is also applicable to any other medical problem.  Dr. Francescutti and graduate student **Trevor Strome** began developing the software five years ago. The research

team's work led to the formation of the ROAM I.T. Corporation, a start-up company formed to further develop the data-management software.  AHFMR's Technology Commercialization program helped the young company get its innovative product off the ground. The RAMPART-EMS system is now being used successfully by emergency medical services in Alberta, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories. Users say there has been a significant increase in the quality and detail of the patient reports they produce with the system. * Pictured above L - R: Dr. Louis Francescutti, Al Gourley, Lloyd Osler

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The ion channel basic heart research group at the University of Calgary consists of six scientists, five of whom have been supported by AHFMR for a total of 83 years. In 2000, the group received over 1 million dollars from AHFMR. The group members—Dr. Wayne Giles, Dr. Robert French, Dr. Paul Kubes, Dr. Paul Schnetkamp, Dr. Jonathan Lytton and Dr. Robert Clark—have generated two and a half times that amount in outside funding for a total of \$3.7 million.

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Valentine's Day

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Family Day (Alberta)

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January

March

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MARCH





THE MEDIA ASSAULT US WITH IMAGES OF PERFECTION.

Reed-thin models and actors strut down the catwalk, pout from glossy fashion magazines, and live improbably perfect lives on television shows and in the movies. Not surprisingly, the constant bombardment of unrealistic images like these has taken its toll on the self-esteem and body image of a disturbingly high number of young girls and women in North America.  In a recent project on women's nutrition and body image, researcher **Dr. Kim Raine** interviewed 47 women concerning their experiences and feelings about their bodies. She also asked them about aspects of their social environment that influenced the way they saw themselves, and how their body images were connected to eating patterns that might or might not be healthy. Out of the body image project came a nutrition-education program that is based on social change. It encourages women to take action, to demand an environment more supportive of a wide range of healthy body sizes. *

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<i>24</i> <i>31</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>30</i>
					Good Friday	



A P R I L





IT'S STILL A MYSTERY WHY, decades after they recover from the initial paralysis, post-polio patients again drastically lose strength, particularly in those muscles originally affected by polio. **■** Celina Pietrusik has post-polio syndrome. It has forced her to use a wheelchair, and she is easily fatigued. Celina, who normally doesn't exercise, is participating in a three-month study of people who had polio. Conducted by **Dr. Ming Chan**, the project is investigating how motor units in muscle work and how exercise might help keep them in good working order. Three times a week, a trainer


from Dr. Chan's lab comes to her house for an exercise-training session in which Celina is put through a set of light weightlifting exercises. Then, once a month, she goes to Dr. Chan's lab at the University of Alberta, where changes in her muscle strength and motor-unit function are measured. Results from this work will help establish guidelines for preserving and improving the muscle function of post-polio patients. ❁


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MAY





MISHA HARTFEIL experienced mixed emotions on the day she found out she had been accepted into AHFMR's Heritage Youth Researcher Summer Program (HYRS). That morning, she heard that she hadn't got into another summer-research program she had applied for. "I was so depressed. I thought I'd be working at the mall for the summer," she says with a laugh. "Then, later that day, I got the call that I'd been accepted into the HYRS program. I was so excited after that." 

The 17-year-old is one of 42 bright, science-loving teenagers who were matched with top-notch Alberta researchers as part of HYRS, a six-week, paid summer-research position. That day turned out to be good experience for the work she would be doing in **Dr. Nick Coupland's** psychiatric research lab. As part of a larger investigation on depression, the Grade 11 student tested healthy volunteers who were given medications that temporarily altered their brain chemicals. They were then judged on their reactions to computer-morphed faces portraying various emotions. 

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J U N E





WHEN MICHELLE BEELBY'S DAUGHTER KELSEY was diagnosed with juvenile diabetes five years ago, the St. Albert mom "jumped in with both feet" as a volunteer to raise money to help find a cure. Since then, it's been a family affair. While Michelle has formalized her role as a fundraiser with the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, her bubbly nine-year-old acts as a national spokesperson to raise awareness of the disease. **■** Scientists around the world are working overtime to eradicate diabetes. Alberta researchers have led the way with headline-grabbing discoveries,

including last year's ground-breaking Edmonton Protocol islet transplantation procedure, a world first in diabetes treatment. **Dr. Tim Kieffer** and his University of Alberta colleagues took another step forward when they successfully engineered gastrointestinal cells of mice in a way that allows them to take over the job of regular insulin-producing cells which are destroyed or don't produce enough insulin in diabetes. They can also release insulin at the precise moment it's needed to manage blood-sugar levels—during a meal. *****

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May

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July

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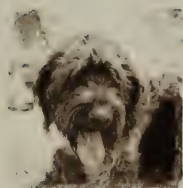
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Father's Day

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CANCER CELLS ARE TENACIOUS. They continue to proliferate even after an onslaught by killer T cells—the immune system's response to invaders that weaken it. After years of scientific inquiry, a series of key discoveries made right here in Alberta has revealed how these body warriors attack and destroy cancer cells, and how cancer cells still manage to evade the killer T cells' grasp. **Dr. Chris Bleackley's** most recent breakthrough has shown that tumours express low levels of a certain molecular receptor that allows them to escape death. This momentous finding points the way to potential new treatments for cancer. "Knowing the trigger that allows cancer cells to dodge death means researchers can now focus on how to get the cells to make more receptors, or find a way to convince the ones that are there to accept the killer T cells," explains Dr. Bleackley, winner of the Robert L. Noble Prize, the most prestigious Canadian prize in cancer research. "It's the perfect target for drug therapies." Since making the discovery, the researcher's Edmonton-based lab has moved quickly to test it, already producing encouraging results with breast cancer cells. ✱

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tues</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thurs</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
<i>June</i> S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	<i>I</i> Canada Day	<i>2</i> 	<i>3</i> 	<i>4</i> 	<i>5</i> 	<i>6</i>
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AUGUST





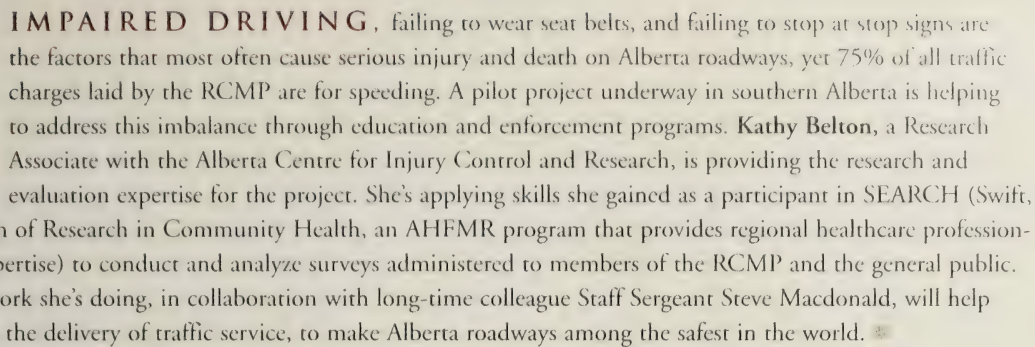
IT'S QUITE COMMON to hear that a fragile senior has slipped on the ice or had a nasty fall at home, and broken a hip. Are serious falls like these preventable? Does worrying about falling actually make seniors more susceptible to doing so? **Dr. Lesley Brown**, pictured here with Marian Ellerman, is examining these questions as part of a two-year project on age-related changes in balance. She's comparing older adults (ranging in age from 60 to 90) to a group of young, active university students to see how a threat to balance changes the way they control their balance. The two groups are being put through a series of physical tests ranging from walking on a balance beam to standing at the edge of a raised platform. **■** The University of Lethbridge researcher's work has shown that the rigid posture people assume when there is a chance they'll fall, as well as a hyper-awareness induced by fear of falling may actually contribute to falls. Dr. Brown hopes that her findings will be incorporated into rehabilitation programs for seniors. ❁

Sun Mon Tues Wed Thurs Fri Sat

<i>July</i> <i>S M T W T F S</i> 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	<i>September</i> <i>S M T W T F S</i> 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30			<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>4</i>	<i>5</i> Civic Holiday	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>
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S E P T E M B E R





O C T O B E R





WHEN DENNIS STILES, an active squash player, started experiencing numbness in his legs, he and his doctor wrote it off as a pinched sciatic nerve due to overexertion on the court. The 54-year-old admits now that it was probably an early sign of multiple sclerosis (MS), the neurologic disease he was diagnosed with almost ten years later. "My male ego got in the way," he says. "I didn't want to admit there was a problem." Now Dennis, who alternates between walking on crutches and using a wheelchair, is an active volunteer with the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada's peer link program, where he calls fellow MS patients to offer support and information. While researchers are still in quest of a cure, progress has been made in the treatment of the debilitating disease. **Dr. Voon Wee Yong** and his University of Calgary colleagues are fine-tuning currently available drugs to increase their effectiveness. Understanding how these drugs work better will help them to discover new treatments. They hope to start clinical trials to test their work in about a year.

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tues</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thurs</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
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	Thanksgiving					
<i>20</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>27</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>31</i>		
Back to Standard Time						<i>November</i> S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30

N O V E M B E R





A CONVERSATION WITH A PERUVIAN SCIENTIST working in a colleague's lab led to a unique research project for Dr. John Wallace, who has been searching out sources of relief from inflammation. He is now testing the scientific properties of a tree sap that has been used in the Amazon for centuries to treat pain, skin wounds, and inflammation of the gastrointestinal tract. "We're trying to identify the active ingredients in the sap and how they work," the noted University of Calgary researcher explains. "We've had some success in identifying the mechanism through which the sap relieves pain." A product of fast-growing croton trees found throughout the Amazon region, the exotic sap may work on many forms of inflammation. Indigenous peoples of the Amazon dilute it and make a drink to treat stomach pain. In a successful clinical trial, Dr. Wallace and colleagues in New York State have also tested a balm made from the sap that seems to quickly stop the itch and pain from several types of insect bites. *

Sun *Mon* *Tues* *Wed* *Thurs* *Fri* *Sat*

AHFMR has awarded more than \$17.5 million over the past two decades to diabetes researchers at the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary.

October

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December

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Remembrance Day

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
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D E C E M B E R





PEDIATRIC RESPIROLOGIST Dr. Val Kirk, pictured here with young Patrick Weaver, is a specialist in sleep apnea in children, a disorder that affects almost 3% of youngsters. Sleep apnea is a chronic condition that causes people to stop breathing briefly while asleep. It can happen hundreds of times a night, preventing them from getting the sound sleep children need for normal growth and development. In one project, the Calgary researcher is working with a child psychologist to look at the effects of sleep apnea on learning and behaviour.  Dr. Kirk has also teamed with internationally known sleep specialist Dr. John Remmers to adapt for use with children the SnoreSat Sleep Recorder, a home monitor he invented to help diagnose sleep apnea. Currently, patients must go for an overnight sleep study in a hospital laboratory—an intimidating place for some small children. “We’re trying to figure out if we can avoid the sleep lab altogether and make a diagnosis by combining the results of the home monitor with the results of a physical exam and medical history,” says Dr. Kirk. *

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tues</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thurs</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>15</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>22</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>28</i>
			Christmas Day	Boxing Day		
<i>29</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>31</i>	<div>November</div> <div>SMTWTFS</div> <div>12</div> <div>3456789</div> <div>10111213141516</div> <div>17181920212223</div> <div>24252627282930</div>		<div>January</div> <div>SMTWTFS</div> <div>1234</div> <div>567891011</div> <div>12131415161718</div> <div>19202122232425</div> <div>262728293031</div>	
<div>Edmonton is home to the Perinatal Research Centre, a top ranked multidisciplinary research group based at the University of Alberta and the Royal Alexandra Hospital. In 2000 the Centre has received over \$800,000 in AHFMR funding. The Centre's researchers have more than quadrupled that amount for an approximate total of \$3,500,000 in outside funding.</div>						

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2002



AHFMR MISSION

A HFMR supports a community of researchers who generate knowledge that improves the health and quality of life of Albertans and people throughout the world.

AHFMR's long-term commitment is to fund basic, patient and health research in all fields based on international standards of excellence and carried out by new and established investigators and researchers in training.

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